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ABSTRACT

Issues in distance education at the tertiary level in Australia are addressed in three papers. The need to provide mature students with information before course attendance is discussed by Edward R. Reid-Smith in "Why Educational Advisory Services for Mature Students?" During 1982-1984, new external students at Riverina College of Advanced Education were sent a pre-course informational package that covered time management, motivation, finance, and the family. A "Returning to Study" correspondence course was also offered. E. David Meacham's paper, "Suggestions Arising from an Investigation of Distance Education in the United Kingdom," explores the relevance of external studies in the United Kingdom to educational practice at the Riverina College of Advanced Education. Information is included on external studies and industry, resource-based learning, staff development, design of learning materials, and computer-assisted learning. In "Motivation of Adults: Implications of Adult Learning Theories for Distance Education," Michael Hough considers the problem of motivating adults, with attention to: adult learning principles; needs and interests of adults; the design of adult programs; and implications for tertiary colleges and staff, particularly those involved in correspondence teaching. (SW)

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OCCASIONAL PAPERS 3

Some Implications for Distance Educators . . .

Riverina College of Advanced Education

SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR DISTANCE EDUCATORS

by Staff of Riverina College

Division of External Studies
Riverina College of Advanced Education
Wagga Wagga NSW 2650

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

Until now, editorial responsibility for Occasional Papers has been with Edward Reid-Smith whose enthusiasm and energy launched the first edition in September 1980. As the new editor, my first duty is therefore to thank Edward Reid-Smith for successfully launching Occasional Papers. In these days of economic constraint it has been possible to produce a publication of only very modest proportions but then, as we all realise, the value of any publication lies in the quality of the written matter rather than the grandeur of its presentation. It is fitting that the first of the three short papers in this edition has been contributed by Edward Reid-Smith.

Despite being "under new management" the goals of Occasional Papers remain very much the same as before. It is hoped that Occasional Papers opens yet another small window on the world of distance education as well as providing an outlet for those working at Riverina CAE in the field of external study to report to a wider audience on matters of interest.

Edward Reid-Smith's paper, "Why Educational Advisory Services for Mature Students?" is a timely reminder that there is much that can be done to assist new students by way of pre-course information provided it is sent early enough.

The second paper, contributed by David Meacham, senior educational development officer at Riverina CAE, makes a number of suggestions for the improvement of external studies at this College arising from his recent study leave in the United Kingdom. Although the suggestions are specific to Riverina CAE many may also be applicable to other tertiary institutions involved in external teaching.

Michael Hough's paper was originally prepared for the ASPESA Workshop held at Riverina CAE in 1982. It was then revised and published in Distance Education (Vol 5 No 1, 1984). Michael Hough has since left the staff of Riverina CAE. His article is an excellent attempt to describe the nature of the adult learner and some of the possible implications for tertiary colleges.

By the way, in case you are wondering why this edition of Occasional Papers is number three when you received number four some months ago, there is a reason. Number three ran into all kinds of problems and delays so it was decided that numbers 3 and 4 would have to appear concurrently. However, as things turned out number four had a smooth run and came out on time but number three continued to suffer all sorts of indecencies. So, here at last is number three - although rather different to the original concept but hopefully decent. The next edition will be number five.

DAVID ROBERTS
EDITOR

WHY EDUCATIONAL ADVISORY SERVICES FOR MATURE STUDENTS?

by Edward R. Reid-Smith

Two trends in Australian tertiary education have special relevance for Riverina College in the 1980s: the continuing demand for external study facilities, and the increasing proportion of mature students. Of course, these are not the only important phenomena, nor are they seen only in this college. However, they are factors which cannot be ignored either in the selection of educational techniques, or by the administrative planning process.

Although this college does not maintain the statistics which many would consider essential to a management information system (MIS), there has been some improvement since 1978. That a similar situation has existed nation-wide is suggested in the Williams Report, which stated:

> "The low quality of the statistical returns from many of the colleges, and the apparent unawareness of high attrition rates, were also disconcerting. Some of the returns justified grave doubts about the accuracy of the statistics returned to the Tertiary Education Commission... Advanced education statistics are inadequate in accuracy and cover". (1)

Nevertheless, it has been only too easy in the past for unsubstantiated accusations to be made concerning high 'wastage' rates in particular subjects and courses. The use of emotive terminology may indeed hide the fact that in many colleges institutional aims have not been properly decided upon and recorded initially, making it more difficult for individual courses and subjects to have objectives relating to their institutions' philosophies.

Although Riverina College has not maintained profiles of the student body over the years, some rather unrefined statistics are available which indicate the number of students enrolled at various points throughout the year. Table 1 shows how both the actual numbers and the relative percentages of external students have grown during the past few years.

Table 1: Student Enrolments at RCAE April 1976/1984						
	1976			1984		
	(N)	%	EFTS%	(N)	%	EFTS%
Full time	1415	56.0	79.3	1258	22.5	36.8
Part time	576	22.8	10.8	780	14.0	11.4
External	535	21.2	10.0	3549	63.5	51.8

Because some students graduate or withdraw or take leave during the year, these figures are not maintained. Furthermore, the proportions do not remain constant due to the higher rate of withdrawals by external students. However, it is encouraging to note that the overall average grades of graduating external students do tend to be slightly higher than for full-timers.

Educational Consequences

Considering the importance of external students to the college, it is surprising that relatively little staff training takes place either on newly taking up lecturing duties or on a continuing education (in-service) basis. External tuition is not merely an off-campus version of classroom techniques, for the students' study environment is quite different. This calls for not only the provision of a range of facilities to cater for individual learning styles and needs, but also a special understanding by academic staff of the possible psychological reactions of students to the conflicting pressures of employment, social needs, and family life.

There may also be a tendency for academic staff not to take sufficient notice of the maturity of external students. Most of these will not be mature in their study techniques, in their information handling activities, and in their subject knowledge. It is therefore easy to forget that they are mature in many other ways - in age, in work experience, in family responsibilities, for example. Because such students are rarely seen by us we may fail to build on their maturity, but instead may make the mistake of taking their immaturity in comprehending mail packages as indicating that they are not essentially different from younger students. (2)

Mature external students have problems not faced by younger students, especially those with on-campus support services. Put simply, most mature external students (whose decision-making takes place in isolation from the academic supportive environment) will ease any pressures by withdrawing from study rather than from family or employment! Indeed, study is frequently recognised as a contributing factor to marital problems. Of course, lecturers are continually called upon to give academic advice, and the college's counsellor is available to external and internal students alike. Still, it has to be recognised that we tend to patch up problems of mature students rather than anticipate them. (3)

Administrative Consequences

Possibly even more than lecturers, administrative staff are called upon to play the numbers game. It is they who must balance the books, and maintain student numbers in order to ensure that quotas are filled and finance obtained. If the college's enrolment is deficient by one student place, the administration may decide to enrol two external students (on an EFTS basis). Allowance for the higher withdrawal rate may indeed necessitate enrolling three external students. As for academic staff, the work involved in dealing with any student is the same, whether on or off campus. For administrators the time and money spent on filling each student place is more when external students are enrolled initially. Furthermore, because they remain for about twice as long as on-campus students, their external colleagues must be enrolled about twice as many times.

Is it any wonder, then, that the matter of 'wastage' sometimes becomes an emotional rather than a rational issue? How is it that although there are several hundred items in the literature of student attrition, no overall 'cure' has been found?

College Statistics

It became increasingly apparent to the writer during late 1977 and early 1978, that much comment concerning attrition at RCAE was not based on firm data. Until the end of 1977 the main statistics compiled and retained were those prepared for the then Advanced Education Board of NSW. (In that year, for example, printouts are only available for 31 March, 18 April, and 1 and 8 August.) Since then, however, printouts have been produced at approximately monthly intervals, enabling the MIS to indicate somewhat crudely the key periods when students at risk formally withdraw.

This improved availability of data has also facilitated some comparison between the enrolment patterns of the various courses, study modes, and number of years enrolled. Although certain factors have prevented the kind of research which some staff would like to have seen, it has nevertheless been possible to produce some useful planning information for the college's management. Such information should not be used in isolation, of course, but seen in the context of similar information from other colleges and countries.

Early Attrition

The concept of 'blame' may be quite highly developed in academic institutions throughout the world. Students are seen to 'fail' because their coursework is not awarded an arbitrary minimum mark. Academic staff may 'fail' when they are unpopular or too many of their students withdraw or fail to pass. Administrators may 'fail' because they play the wrong political game - or do not play it when they should.

Student attrition may therefore have serious consequences for all three sections of any academic community.

However, if external students merely receive their mail packages but do not submit any assignments for comment and assessment, who is then to blame? The student, the lecturer or the administrator? The problem of non-starters is so well known as a feature of distance education, that the Open University in Britain has introduced a period of three months' provisional registration, to enable new students to decide on the suitability of this study mode before final registration. (4) This facility entails extra work for administrative staff, but doubtless contributes to the high claimed 'success rate' of 60% of finally registered students.

Pre-course Information

It was this phenomenon of non-starters and early withdrawers which led the present writer to suggest that many students suffered from a lack of information concerning external study, and led to the suggestion in 1980 that applicants should be sent a pre-course package to rectify this. A mock-up was prepared but expense prevented its development and usage at that time. However, an examination of institutional and course publicity (such as handbooks, course brochures and newspaper advertisements) confirmed that this material was designed to attract interest, but was generally uninformative concerning what being an external student really entailed. People attracted by the thought that they could study externally in their spare time, soon discovered that they didn't have any - or not enough of it, or not at the right times. If the first residential school is a financial shock, the first mail package may create a family crisis.

However, the proposal was taken up during the following year, and it was decided that the College would send out to new external students a pre-course informational package. The development of this was greatly encouraged and facilitated by Dr Les Eastcott, then Director of External Studies. The result was the two-part workbook "Welcome to Study" which was sent to new students in 1982, 1983 and 1984 (the last revised by Roger Clements). The original intention was that it should be sent to persons enquiring about external study at Riverina College, with the hope that it would encourage those who found the mode potentially suitable to enrol, and dissuade those who consequently decided that it was the wrong method or an inconvenient time. It may seem contrary to college policy to discourage people from enrolling, but the author saw this as preferable to early withdrawal.

The first decision was that the workbooks should be written in a friendly ('you/me') style, to indicate that students feeling isolated would find a warm understanding of their situation by staff. This was reinforced by one particular drawing by Mandy Collins - that of Riverina College's welcoming open arms. Feedback confirmed that this initial impact was most successful. Following a short introduction to external study, the first part looked at a selection of topics which it was felt students should consider early - time management, motivation, finance, and the family. Experiences as both student and lecturer suggested that the last was most important for many mature students, and that a hostile or even an uncaring family could lead to withdrawal from study. Leaflets were therefore included in the package which could be given to husband, children or wife as appropriate, in order to encourage family discussion on how they could support this student who remained in the family home.

However, the writer was suitably chastened by the comment of one person who responded: "Your booklet is very chauvinist. I notice the timetable shown has a background slave for cooking and cleaning - not very realistic for most women, for instance. Similarly your little drawings on your family prompt sheets. Not all women are looking for entertainment. Some even work already".

The sample of part of a mail package for new applicants to work through was included to introduce new students to the teaching methodology, but its value is greatly reduced if received at the same time as regular mail packages. On the other hand, the second part was designed to give a few hints on some study techniques, and in particular to encourage the formation of study groups to combat isolation. These could be either through personal contact, or by using the post or telephone. We should, of course, now be encouraging the use of personal computers in communication facilitated by modems. Indeed, the writer has been working on the production of an edition of "Welcome to Study" on floppy disk, which can be mailed to potential students who have access to a Commodore 64 in the months before the start of semester.

Pre-Study Advisory Service

Whose job is it to give information and advice to older people when they are first thinking about taking up study, some years after leaving school? Whilst we have plenty of colleges and universities competing for the limited number of potential buyers of their course offerings, few if any consider it their task to run a consumer information service in this field. Here, the Division of Continuing Education at Riverina College has taken the lead.

Linked with the 1980 suggestion of a pre-course information package for potential external students of this college, was another which looked at an even earlier stage in decision-making. The writer felt that it was not enough merely to help people decide whether our external courses were right for them at this stage of their lives. They needed to be encouraged to ask themselves several other basic questions such as:

- Do I want to study?
- What do I want to study?
- Why do I want to study?
- At what level do I want to study?
- Where do I want to study?
- Where may I study?
- How should I study - the modes available?
  - the techniques?
- What are my study strengths and weaknesses?

It seemed to the writer that many mature students may withdraw from courses because they have not satis- factorily resolved these questions before enrolling.

Possibly with some professional bias, the writer believed that educational information services should be provided by public libraries in Australia. However, one serious problem is that librarians are not equipped to offer the guidance and counselling service needed to ensure full usage of that information. It was here that Alan Le Marne came to the rescue with the suggestion that a "Returning to Study" correspondence course should be offered. This allowed not only information regarding various study facilities available in this country to be given, but also a personal service designed to assist the adult person come to a considered decision based on the above questions. The three printed booklets in the course are therefore merely the skeleton around which this advisory course is built, and the time-consuming part consists of the encouragement of informed decision-making carried out 'at a distance'.

Conclusion

Has it been worthwhile developing "Welcome to Study" and "Returning to Study"? What should happen next? Judging by the feedback, both sets of workbooks have been helpful to those for whom they were intended, but both could usefully be revised. If the former is to be issued in its present form it must be sent out not later than the end of the year before study at Riverina College begins. Practice in essay and report writing needs to be included, with tutorial assistance. If this cannot happen then the sample part mail package should be replaced by a more helpful section on organising study and assignment writing. However, the development of "Welcome to Study" to include an introductory bridging course, preferably with at least one weekend school, could be valuable for mature new external students.

What of "Returning to Study"? With more than 60 people enrolling in this course in 1984 alone (and with minimum advertising), it seems that this personal service could be greatly expanded. The main problem is time; time for the adult to consider all the various educational opportunities available, in Australia today. Time for the tutor to guide and inform and counsel, without exerting undue direction. Once again there is a potential for automating part of this, particularly in updating details of the educational facilities offered by tertiary institutions, by adult education agencies, and by informal organisations. At the same time, both services call for close personal interaction between student and tutor. That's what education is all about, and where Riverina College can lead the field.

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SUGGESTIONS ARISING FROM AN INVESTIGATION OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

by E. David Meacham

Abstract

During the early part of 1984, a series of educational institutions in the United Kingdom were visited, with a view to investigating the relevance of their operations to the provision of external studies in RCAE (Riverina College of Advanced Education). This paper focusses on suggestions arising from the investigation; a detailed account of the observations giving rise to these recommendations is available in the form of a Professional Experience Programme Report "An Examination of Distance Learning Institutions in the United Kingdom: Observations, Implications and Recommendations", held by RCAE Library.

In the United Kingdom there are few institutions comparable with RCAE which has a fairly large number of external students and an almost equal interest in traditional on-campus teaching. The United Kingdom scene is dominated by the Open University (OU) which has in excess of 70,000 external students and only a few post-graduate on-campus. In contrast external teaching plays only a minor part in the operations of most other institutions who indulge in it. In Australia, there are proportionately many more institutions offering external studies, with the majority of them subscribing to the so called 'New England Model' which seeks to integrate external and internal teaching of the same courses of study.

Given the level of commitment of resources external studies operates at, in comparison with United Kingdom institutions, our learning materials, delivery and production procedures can be considered to be in a satisfactory state.

We are one of the most successful low budget operators in Australia, insofar as we offer a very large range of subjects to a substantial number of students at a cost acceptable both to the institution and students.

However, observations of other institutions suggest:

- we offer too many courses externally to produce materials of the highest quality;
- our lead times between course conception and production are too short for great improvements;
- our typesetting and printing facilities are primitive;

- the use of computers in distance learning is being neglected;

- our distance education materials are a vastly underused resource;

- peer assessment and other types of evaluation are largely non-existent here;

- concurrent on and off-campus teaching is not conducive to the development of a high degree of commitment to external studies.

In particular in the United Kingdom it was interesting to note:

1 The increasing relevance of distance learning to the needs of industry.

Distance learning is increasingly being perceived as a means by which training can be given in fields such as management, computing and electronics, without necessitating the removal of the employee from the workplace.

To cater for this demand it was considered essential that the contents of courses should be based on a thorough analysis of the needs of potential clients, not the interests of teachers or institutions.

2 Distance learning materials were increasingly being used as the foundations of resource based learning systems. This enabled an institution to offer a wide range of courses, with a minimum of teaching expertise. In addition it encourages students to become more independent learners, and freed up lecturers to deal with problem areas, such as difficult parts of subjects or weak students.

3 Many institutions had difficulties in preparing academics to write learning materials. The most success seemed to be evident in situations where materials were developed over a period of time, using a team of academics and technical advisers. There was a general concern about problems associated with developing the skills of academics in relation to using computers to assist learning.

4 There was relatively little collaboration between institutions, but this was being encouraged by Open Tech, who were concerned with using all available resources in an area to meet the needs of local industry and commerce.

5 Even institutions with far lower numbers of external students than we have set and printed material to higher standards than those we aspire to. Also there was a growing interest in the relationship between the quality of study materials and rates of attrition. Although audio cassettes were increasingly being regarded as useful, the use of video was not widespread, and regarded as extremely problematical, especially in terms of production costs.

6 There was a widespread interest in the application of computers to distance learning. The rapid expansion and sophistication of microcomputers was thought to be of special relevance to the introduction of computer assisted learning to courses for external students.

New methods of electronic communication were being actively investigated, but no practical, large scale alternative to posting print had been identified.

7 Some institutions were investigating and operating systems of corporate sponsorship, where funding for learning materials was provided in return for discrete advertising.

A detailed consideration of the above points generated the following suggestions for improving the service to external students.

External Studies and Industry

The College should explore the possibility of adapting existing learning resources to the needs of specific industries.

Attempts should be made to offer short, non-award, skill based courses, in response to specific, but widespread demand.

Pilot courses providing financial, managerial and technical skills for the local area should be initiated, using adaptations of existing learning resources.

Courses involving the preparation of industrial trainers should be carefully scrutinised and strongly supported.

The College should produce and market a comprehensive set of learning materials designed to 'train potential trainers' in industry and commerce. Such materials should be used for: continuing education, seminars and workshops, correspondence students.

Resource Based Learning

The College be established as an experimental centre of resource based learning, where efforts would be made to offer a wide range of courses using a minimum of academic staff.

Educational Services and/or External Studies be built up, to provide the additional learning materials required for such a scheme.

If successful, resource based learning should be introduced on the Wagga Campus for subjects with consistently small enrolments.

Resource based learning should seriously be considered in areas where lecturers are not readily available. For example, a wider range of subjects could be offered in Albury, and some of our more esoteric external offerings written by contracted authors could be offered on-campus. Similarly, subjects with very small or very large numbers should be considered prime candidates for a resource based learning system.

The under-utilization of available learning materials is a matter for urgent consideration.

Staff Development

Academics new to external teaching be required to work in the first instance with a more experienced colleague.

Money be allocated for regular extended visits by consultants in the field of distance education.

A special library collection should be set up, dealing with the administration of external studies, the nature of external students, and the design of course materials.

The College should subscribe to all journals relevant to this area, and acquire numerous works relating to distance education.

That the Division of External Studies organise support and workshops for external authors.

A series of workshops for academic staff concerned with educational uses of microcomputers should be developed.

Academic staff should work in teams containing experienced writers and those who are new to the task.

The College should seriously consider the appointment of an Educational Systems Analyst to work with the computer manager on behalf of the academic staff.

Collaboration With Other Institutions

Contact should be made with the Distance Learning Project Manager in the Scottish School of Business Studies with a view to exchanging course materials.

The College should undertake a formal system of exchange of distance learning materials with institutions both in Australia and overseas.

The College should set up a collaborative open learning scheme, based on Albury and involving an analysis of local needs, and a partnership with TAFE.

Design of Learning Materials

Experiments should be made involving the ring binding and other alternative presentations of distance learning materials.

External Studies Development Officers and Media Services increase their efforts to encourage and facilitate the use of audio-cassettes across a wider range of subjects than at present. New courses to begin with an introductory tape outlining the whole course, giving the views of experts in the field etc.

A pilot plan be devised to trial and evaluate selected subjects.

Where practical, mail packages should offer students alternative scheduling, choice of content, ways of learning, methods of assessment etc.

Selected subjects should be revised using a team approach which allows peer comment and adequate editing. This would require a greater lead time and possible reprinting of the existing materials in the interim period.

Courses with high attrition rates should be subject to experimentation in areas of content, layout, assignments, feedback etc. and the results of any changes, closely monitored.

There should be a review of the range of assessment procedures used in external teaching, paying particular attention to: number and type of assignments, time taken for completion, validity, reliability, effects upon student learning and attrition, speed and quality of feedback etc.

At this stage it would seem unwise to encourage widespread use of video materials for external students. It is recommended that the use of video be discouraged unless there are particular, compelling reasons to the contrary. Similarly the College should not be diverted from the need to operate a highly efficient delivery system of conventional material, electronic mail, satellites, textual transmission and the like, must be regarded as potentially of value, but neither necessary or desirable given our present resource base.

The College should not recruit significant numbers of school leavers into correspondence, without providing them with an initial year on-campus.

Consideration should be given both to using set texts more comprehensively and to giving students more choice in their learning.

Where small numbers are taught, every attempt should be made to use a text as the basic learning resource, if a suitable text is available.

Computer Assisted Learning

The use of microcomputers in assisting the teaching of all College courses be thoroughly investigated.

Continuing Education consider the development of a number of skills based programmes presented on microcomputers and meeting community, commercial and industrial needs.

A BBC 'B' microcomputer should be purchased with a view to operating the MAIL system of student feedback, or one of our own design. Also the use of the main frame computer should be considered in this context.

Small scale trials of computer assisted learning should begin in appropriate subject areas. The results should be carefully monitored and widely reported.

Our resources should be directed to existing hardware, software, infrastructures and attitudes. Tele- conferencing and computer assisted learning should be developed, rather than satellites, cables, teletext, video-scanning, etc.

The External Studies Committee sponsor an investigation into the problems and possibilities of computer assisted learning for correspondence students.

The Division of External Studies investigate further the Centre for Medical Education's use of computers in distance learning.

The use of the main frame and microcomputers should be considered in giving external students simulated problems to solve, and in providing opportunities to practice rote operations.

With a view to purchasing new equipment, a comprehensive investigation be made into the feasibility of establishing a system which allows word processed material to be easily typeset, without retyping.

The possibilities and implications of obtaining external funding from commercial sources for some of our courses should be carefully considered.

How many of these suggestions are capable of being operationalised is indeed a problem, however the 'not invented here' syndrome should be avoided through a system of restrained innovation and careful monitoring.

MOTIVATION OF ADULTS: IMPLICATIONS OF ADULT LEARNING THEORIES FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION

by Michael Hough

This paper attempts to address the problem of motivating adults, particularly but not only in the context of distance teaching. Its approach is needs based, in that it identifies in some detail the needs and interests of adults, due to an acceptance of a viewpoint promoted constantly in adult learning theories - that effective learning should be based on the needs and interest characteristics of the adult learner.

Thus this paper will attempt to: review the general principles of adult learning; describe in detail the nature of the adult learner as suggested by current literature; provide suggestions for the design of learning programmes for adults; review some implications for tertiary colleges and their staff, particularly those engaged in correspondence teaching, of accepting ideas about motivation derived from adult learning theories.

ADULT LEARNING: ANDRAGOGY

The emerging theories of how adults learn (as distinct from how children learn) were subsumed into the term 'andragogy' by Knowles (1970). The term refers to the principles of adult learning, as a contrast to the term 'pedagogy'; which describes the principles of child or adolescent learning.

Sources such as Kidd (1973), Cropley (1977), Knowles (1970, 1978a, 1978b), Miller and Verduin (1979), Peterson (1979), Whitbourne and Weinstock (1979) and Kimmel (1980) review the principles and scope of adult learning theories. One essential idea that has emerged from such sources is that adults do not learn, think (or even read) in any single or simple way. Newton (1977: 116) depicts the adult learner as 'an autonomous, experience laden, goal seeking, "now" oriented problem centred individual'.

A key feature of adult learning approaches can be summarized as: 'it allows the learner to select the content and processes of learning; content and process are based on individual needs and interests' (Meyer, 1977: 117).

In a later section in this article adult career and life stages are reviewed, and one of the andragogical principles stated by Newton (1977: 362) provides a direct linkage and support for studying the career and life stage needs of adults, namely:

> '... the adult's readiness for learning is inherent in his societal role as worker, parent, spouse, organization member and the like. Since need is basic to want and readiness, the requirements and demands of the adult's present situation and aspiring roles in real life must dominate and supersede all other considerations in andragogy.'

Another guide to important priorities in designing meaningful learning experiences is provided by Petersen's (1979) review, of the research literature on learning by adults. This review concluded that only three major demographic variables - age, level of educational attainment and place of residence - were highly relevant for educational planning. These factors support the argument that the needs and experience-based concepts of andragogy offer useful insights into the learning need patterns of adults, in a way summarized by Lowe (1975: 51):

> 'the implications of andragogy for education are obvious. We might best summarize them by advising adult educators to spend as much time studying the rhythm of mental, physical and emotional development of their students as do child psychologists and pedagogues in the primary school.'

THE NATURE OF THE ADULT LEARNER

Since one direct pathway to motivating adults is to meet their needs, the following needs-based aspects will now be reviewed:

1. adult life stage theories
2. career stage theories, illustrated by a selected professional workgroup, and
3. perceived limitations in such stage theories.

1. Adult Life Stage Theories

A literature review reveals a group of stage theorists who describe how adults' needs and interests change as they progress through the perceived stages of adult life. These writers can be categorized into age-based theorists who specify a time-based relationship of events, or developmental stage-based theorists who describe details of a sequence of developmental characteristics that could normally be expected. The following review is based on a comprehensive treatment by Mulford (1979).

Life stage theorists such as Gould (1972), Levinson (1974, 1978), O'Connor (1981), Sheehy (1976, 1981) and Viney (1980) have suggested the probable relationship between the concerns, problems and tasks in life that are common to most adults at specific age periods. Levinson (1978: 21) stated that the basic purpose of this type of enquiry was 'an interest in generating and working with hypotheses concerning relatively universal, genotypic, age-linked adult development periods within which variations occur'.

Such proposed patterns of development are characterized by terms such as provisional adulthood, age thirty crisis, mid-life transition and restabilization period.

Developmental stage theorists provide an alternative approach, by focusing on a more abstract continuum than age-based theorists. Their approach is described by Loevinger (1976) as providing 'both a normal developmental sequence and a dimension of individual differences in any given age cohort. All represent holistic views of personality and all see behaviour in terms of meaning and purpose ... Finally, although the sequence of stages is not identical from author to author, there are many recurring similarities.

Developmental stage theorists selected different concepts on which to base their proposed sequence of change. There are those who selected life events such Neugarten (1963, 1968, 1971) and Havighurst (1967); ego development e.g. Erikson (1963), Loevinger (1976), Dale (1968), Chickering (1976) and White (1975); moral development Kohlberg (1968) and Peck and Havighurst (1960), and cognitive development such as Harvey et al (1961), Hunt (1961), Joyce et al (1974) and Oja (1979). Summaries of these theorists are tabulated in Mulford (1979: 159-163).

All developmental theorists, whether age or stage based in their explanation detail, are considered to provide guidelines for understanding and anticipating the rhythms of mental, physical and emotional development in adult interests and needs. Whilst there are certainly differences in detail and emphasis, there is consensus in the broad concept that adults are not similar in their concerns and interests over their life spans. Developmental stages are a more specific concept, used as the mechanism (in most theories) for grouping concerns and interests across different points in the life span.

2. Career Stage Theories

There is a growing body of literature which focusses on the career related needs and interests of particular work groups. A very representative group is provided by those studying and writing about the career needs of teachers who also constitute a group with considerable user requirements for distance education.

Although teaching has for many years been considered a career-less profession (eg Lortie, 1975), a large number of writers have investigated the developmental stages of teachers' careers whilst they remain in the basic task of classroom teaching. Such sources suggest that a teacher's working life can be divided into career stages, and represent a growing body of opinion that there is a range of different career needs associated with the one occupational position of classroom teacher. These stages appear to result from a complex interaction of personal maturation, experience, and changes in attitudes and interests over the working life span of each teacher.

Fuller appears to be the seminal career stage theorist, and published a range of articles in the 1960s and early 1970s on the different concerns of teachers as they progressed from college practice through first year teacher to an experienced teacher. Fuller's contributions were the synthesis of disparate earlier research (see Fuller, 1969 for example), and the conceptualization of a 'developmental concerns' framework of career stage (namely, pre-service beginning teacher and experienced teacher).

> 'these studies suggest the need for different types of inservice and staff development at different career stages. However, they also suggest that there are different stage development inservice needs within groups ... some teachers seem to bypass stages, others do not progress as far in stages as do others.'

This section clearly indicates that professionals have different types of needs at different points in their career, and that situation-specific learning, appropriate for particular sub-groups, is a highly desirable approach to motivate career professionals.

3. Perceived Limitations in Stage Theories

Whilst there is a considerable theory base which describes the needs of adults by career or life stage theories (either age-based or developmental-stage based), there are opposing viewpoints to these perhaps simplistic resolutions of complex human issues. The main opposition to the acceptance of stages or developmental changes as the

means of describing adult needs can be reviewed at two levels: conceptual and methodological. The conceptual concerns emerge from writers who argue that developmental stage change is not the only type of change that would occur, and that there are other elements (stable and unpredictable) to the adult personality, needs and interests.

For example, Neugarten (1963) suggested three key issues existed in any adequate theory of adult development: (a) aspects of orderly and sequential change throughout life; (b) consistency versus change in personality over long periods of time, and (c) issues of antecedent - consequent relationships during a life span.

A broadly similar argument is offered by Gergen (1977) who argued that there are three approaches to understanding and explaining human development: (a) through patterns of stability - explicable through early experience based theories, such as Freud; (b) through patterns of ordered change - explicable through developmental based theories such as Erikson; and, (c) through the now pattern of aleatory (chance) change - influenced by the biological nature of the human organism plus the effects of culture.

Methodological concerns arise because of studies suggesting that analyses based on adults reporting their own needs (eg by surveys) are suspect (see Coleman, 1976: 15-17; Jones and Hayes, 1980; and Brayne, 1980). These studies suggest the existence of both perceived and felt needs. Perceived needs reflect what respondents think should be their needs when reported to another person; whilst felt needs are those that the respondent personally believes they should acquire, although not acknowledging them publicly.

These sources represent the major conceptual concerns detected. In judgement it is considered that they provide a perspective and context from which to use developmental theories, rather than direct opposition to them. Their value is in providing an awareness that there are other aspects of adult behaviour and needs than those suggested from purely developmental considerations.

Thus there may be areas of constant need across the lifelong learning requirements of adults, as well as stage or age specific learning needs. Both dimensions can be acknowledged by adult educators through offering of a range of learning experiences designed to meet specific needs of either change or stability in adults.

This early description of career stages has been pursued by subsequent researchers in one of two different ways: firstly as a pattern of change related to a definite age range or career point, or, secondly, as a pattern of change related to some developmental characteristic or concern of either the teaching process or the teacher.

As examples of the first approach, Smith (1972), Peterson (1979), Newman (1978, 1980) and Ryan (1978) described versions of career progression stages - such as, first year, early, middle or late career.

The alternate approach was provided by theorists who described teacher stages in developmental task terms not immediately relatable to a particular age or job phase. Instead, career stages are described in terms of the developmental progression of a set of characteristics. For example, Gregorc (1973) provided a detailed profile of career developmental in four stages: becoming - growing - maturing - fully functional professional.

Dalton (1977: 23) suggested a four stage pattern of career development for professionals in organizations, with a primary career relationship in each stage of: apprentice, colleague, mentor and sponsor. His developmental model describes each stage in terms of the central career activity, primary relationships and major psychological relationships envisaged.

Other developmental stage descriptions of teachers are provided by Apelman's conceptualization (1978: 25): beginning teacher-focus on new ideas and activities-focus on extending and developing curricula. Krathwohl (1978: 10) suggested the sequence of change: presentation centred-interaction centred-pupil centred; whilst Hall (1978a, 1978b) proposes that teacher concerns can be staged in terms of a level of concern about each innovation, namely: awareness; informational, personal, management, consequence, collaboration and refocussing levels of concern.

This second (developmental) approach tends to offer more sophisticated conceptualizations of staging than does the first (age-related) models. However, the age (or career stage)-based theorists provide a more practicable research approach because of their abilities to identify their proposed stage by clearly measurable demographic characteristics such as age and length of teaching service.

However a major unresolved problem is that age or career point related stage theories tend to assume an inevitable progression through (e.g.) a teacher's career, whilst the developmental task related stage theories do not. There seems little doubt that some physiological age dependent changes usually occur in a teacher's career (e.g. loss of energy and physical capacities). However, earlier conceptions that most adult learning and mental conditions and mental capacities are age dependent have been thoroughly discredited in current adult learning literature (see Kidd 1973, ch. 1 and 2, and Cropley, 1977, for details).

An appropriate perspective on this dilemma is provided by Ryan (1974: 4).

4. Some Specific Adult Learner Characteristics

The first 3 components of this section have suggested that adults will be motivated to learn by learning experiences based on their likely career or life stage needs. Whilst this can be extremely helpful for adult educators involved in people-oriented teaching content (e.g. staff developers), there remains a considerable volume of content which may be deemed important to teach, but is not easily relatable to adult needs.

Leaving aside for a moment a fundamental question for further consideration, should adults be taught content they do not see as relevant to their needs?, the remainder of this section focusses on more specific suggestions for deciding the learning characteristics of adults.

McClusky (1975: 112-121) reviewed learning potential in older adults and indicated that adult performance on intelligence tests show that adults could increase in performance, and certainly did not decline with age as previously was believed. However, McClusky suggests that adults become more differential in their abilities and for learning (and other) purposes we should acknowledge crystallized intelligence - based on experience, and fluid intelligence, based on primary biological forces.

McClusky suggests (1975: 117) that fluid intelligence may peak early and then tend to decline - mainly because of disuse and poor motivation, whilst crystallized intelligence continues to grow to the end of life. He further suggests that any decline is inversely correlated with health and fitness.

Speaking mainly about older adults he states (p. 118):

> 'the capacity to learn is there, possibly in a latent form. But it is there, and it is the task of adult education to arrange the circumstances and the stimulation in order that this potential may be actualized.'

The following sub-sections provide advice summaries about adult learning.

a. Learning Strategies. McClusky provides some learning strategy suggestions for the older adult learner (p. 120-121) in that learning:

- must tap some deep interest and need;
- must restore confidence in ability to learn;
- should be non-competitive;

- should provide plenty of opportunity for fellowship; and
- should be accompanied by the opportunity of counselling to assist learners relate instruction to personal needs.

b. **Learning Situation Characteristics.** Some specific learning situation characteristics suggested by McClusky are:

- a supportive environment;
- the use of techniques that reinforce learning, eg tutors very clear as to learning expectations held;
- use of auditory and visual imagery in the presentation of information;
- self-pacing of learning.

c. **Criteria for Planning Adult Learning.** In another context, McClusky (1970: 166-175) suggests the following characteristics:

i adult learning has demonstrable consequences;

ii the status of the adult's teacher is an essential component of that teacher's task competence;

iii the adult learner is autonomous, and may be sensitive about the learner role;

iv continued learning by adults improves their learning effectiveness;

v active participation by adults improves their learning;

vi problem-solving is a sound learning model for adults;

vii learning is made meaningful to adult learners by:

- dealing with their experiences,
- giving maximum insight into relationships, and
- achieving the goals of the learner;

viii adults may resist learning because of:

- conflict of new learning with ideas of previous learning,
- reluctance to change,
- learning involves risks, and

ix learning transfer occurs when adult capacities for using experience and generalizing experiences can be drawn upon.

Thus to maximise adult learning requires a judicious selection of techniques which optimise the above characteristics and ensure maximum motivation of adults to learn. One essential ingredient that emerges for distance education is that two-way feedback and interaction between learner and learning institution seems to play a vital role in helping to decide whether an appropriate set of factors has been selected for particular learners.

SOME OPTIONS FOR THE ORGANIZATION OF ADULT LEARNING

Bergevin, McKinley and Smith (1970: 270-288) attempted to develop a series of policy guidelines for the instructional activities of adult education. This approach attempted to provide a conceptual framework to account for the structural elements in the adult education situation (p. 270). This section of the paper attempts to summarize that framework, and to comment upon some implications for distance education.

The framework proposes characteristics of the content and structure of an adult focussed educational activity, in order to assist the adult educator (called the learning agent in this approach) to understand more clearly the implications of his or her role. A summary of their main ideas follows.

1. Content Options

Content may be analysed as (op cit. 272-273):

- potential, ie all content that could be selected and presented to the learner;
- manifest, ie all content that is actually provided to the learner;
- latent, ie content that the learner possesses and can bring to the selected learning situation without further stimulus.
- potential latent, ie content that the learner possessed (although may not be able to actively recall at present), that could be brought to the learning situations through the use of appropriate stimuli.
- ultimate, ie this is the content that is actually received by the learner and organized meaningfully in a learning situation. This occurs as a result of presented (ie manifest) content interacting with the learner's latent content to enable new learning to occur.

A number of implications arise from this categorization approach to the roles of content in a teaching-learning situation. It is a teacher's responsibility to organize content relevant to the perceived needs of the learner - by a process of acceptance or rejection of

potential content based on a knowledge of the learner. This implies some type of information gathering phase about learners and their needs may be an important initial step in successful distance education for adults. Another useful mechanism would be to use this information gathering to detect previous learning experiences that suggest latent content, so that the actual content selected provides stimuli to both reactivate and improve upon any past learning.

Thus the role of the designer of distance teaching for adults may need to extend to selecting experiences that maximize latent content in learners, as well as the more obvious (and traditional) task of selecting appropriate new content.

2. Structural Considerations in the Adult Learning Process

The Bergevin et al policy guidelines suggest that structure in the adult learning process can occur through one or all of the following processes: the learning situation; the institution; the learning agent and learning procedures. Suggestions for each of these are now summarized.

a. Structure Through the Learning Process

Process is a summative term arising from the active forces in a learning situation, and at least two types of process exist: the intrapersonal processes within a learner based on needs and values; and the interpersonal aspects between persons which result in phenomena such as selective in-attention, rationalization of learning; projection or perceptual distortion.

Structure which emanates from these types of process can be explained in terms of power relations, social acceptance (or rejection), work attitudes and other non-functional behaviours (eg disruption) in the learning social system. Adult learning may be especially affected by the personal attitudes and interpersonal processes that exist in a learning situation, and adult educators should be particularly sensitive to the impact of their personal interactions and relationships with adult students. The amount of influence of the learner in an adult learning situation appears more significant than in a child/adolescent learning situation, and adult educators are advised to make it an early priority of the design and conduct of learning to determine the characteristics of each adult they teach, and to use this information in developing positive interpersonal relationships with them. This creates considerable difficulties for distance education, which may only be partially overcome by approaches such as face to face contact early in a given course; use of A-V techniques to introduce the teacher to the learner; simple 2 way access systems so that learners can communicate readily with the teacher and with other learners (which implies a very early priority if a course is to inform each learner of the existence, location and the interests of other learners).

b. Structure Through the Institution

The three basic methods used by institutions sponsoring adult education are:

- individual methods, eg correspondence study, directed study, apprenticeships or internships which are all methods used most effectively when learning goals do not call for major changes in social behaviour.

- group methods, eg class, discussion groups, laboratories, assemblies or conventions which are methods used most effectively when learning goals are to promote individual learning in a group setting or to change group behaviour.

- community methods, eg community development projects where the learning goals are to promote corporate attitudes or to change social behaviour. Bergevin et al comment that community methods are rarely used in practice.

Thus an institution can influence structure through its stated (or implied) preferences or requirements for particular methods of approaching learning, and it clearly controls learning to the degree that it is able to commit facilities and resources to particular structural options. In short, institutions probably hold corporate views about the 'appropriate' forms for adult education, and these views may represent very significant barriers to any other approaches. This fact supports the tendency for distance education to be centralized into certain institutions, which presumably have both an attitudinal and financial commitment to the particular requirements of distance education. As a corollary, it also suggests that approaches to the distance education of adults which regard it as an appendage to more traditional face to face teaching, probably create unsympathetic organizational attitudes to what may seem the unnecessary expense and complexities of distance education.

c. Structure Through the Learning Agent

There are probably two basic belief structures from which the adult educator can approach his or her role as a learning agent:

- 'internalized ambivalence' - where the agent's role is that of an enabler to assist the learner change, sometimes in directions that the adult educator would not personally have selected. In this case the emphases are on the learner's needs and perceptions;

  or

- 'reinforcement-reward' - where the educator's role is to assist the learner attain the expected or required responses. In this case, the emphasis is on the learner's overt behaviour in relation to predetermined outcomes.

These different roles for the learning agent lead to very different behaviours for the organizing and presenting of adult learning. Thus the structures imposed by the learning agent are affected by their:

- goals and needs, ie what they hope to gain from the adult learning situation
- conceptions of the nature of adults and of adult learning
- selection of teaching/learning techniques, based on a range of decision factors including: goals of learning activity; availability of resources; size of group; nature of the subject; characteristics of the learner group; physical facilities available; institutional leadership patterns and desired patterns of communication.

The learning agent can also choose to organize and structure adult learning through their selection of operational procedures to guide learning activities. A probable checklist of procedures is now given together with what are considered to be andragogically sound examples for each item.

d. Structure Through Procedure

The learning agent uses operational procedures to guide adult learning activities such as:

- diagnostic processes, eg identifying difficulties or problems in learning as it takes place;
- planning processes, eg involving adult learners in planning learning;
- communication processes, eg an aspect of every phase of the program;
- feedback and appraisal processes, eg getting feedback to agent and learner;
- practice-guidance processes, eg high student participation;
- supportive processes, eg support change in learners by renegotiating requirements if necessary and allay participant's fears.

These above criteria are offered as a feasible checklist of choice options available in the difficult process of optimizing learning in adults, in a specific situation such as distance learning. One major implication of all of these criteria is that they are relatively time-consuming, and approaches do not support brief modular scheduling of formal distance teaching, ie they would be better implemented in longer time blocks than term or semester units.

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ADULT LEARNING CONCEPTS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS INVOLVED IN DISTANCE TEACHING

This section attempts to identify the major reasons why in the opinion of this author: (1) college credit courses and (2) correspondence or off campus mode teaching, will continue to have problems incorporating adult learning principles into course designs and implementation procedures.

College University type limitations and concerns are caused by (in no particular order):

1. The normative (ie comparative) grading assumptions of most tertiary institutions and of many of their staff.

2. The curriculum belief that tertiary institutions can identify a body of knowledge - usually organized into a subject design for presentation - that it is the task of the College/University to pass on to the student.

3. The practice (and probably also the belief) that contact credit hours are essential for success in tertiary study, ie that it is the act of studying for a specified period of time that is an essential ingredient of a formal award from a College or University.

4. The organizational assumptions that courses should be taught in semester/term units, coupled with the concept of normal rates of progress through courses and subject sequences.

5. The relative non-questioning of the assumptions and practices of TAFE and tertiary institutions by the Australian public, as compared with relatively constant comments about the primary and secondary sectors.

Correspondence/off campus education type limitations and concerns are caused by (in no particular order):

1. The financial costs of techniques other than 'one to one' notes and (sometimes) A-V materials designed to transmit knowledge/understanding aspects.

2. The need to supplement the above materials by face-to-face contact, eg residential schools for skill/attitudinal/complex cognitive aspects.

3. Lack of technological alternatives that are economically feasible to implement, in institutions that combine face-to-face/off campus teaching.

4. Lack of expertise in teaching staff as learning agents, capable of implementing adult learning theories and alternate methods for teaching adults.

5. The fact that many adults vote with their feet, ie drop out, rather than criticize their subjects or courses.

6. Most adults who engage in off campus/ correspondence programs are (at least initially) highly motivated to learn, and suspend adult learner behaviour to a degree. In a sense, distance teaching has an elite student group, in motivational terms.

These factors represent the probable barriers to a full implementation of adult learning procedures in post-secondary and distance education. In some cases, considerable thought needs to be given as to whether existing practices should be discarded. For example, certian areas of adult learning (eg the training of medical practitioners, engineers, pilots) clearly have a body of knowledge that needs to be passed on to the student. The probable real usefulness of the preceding checklist is to provide a questioning device to test whether certain traditions and assumptions about tertiary and distance education need to be implemented. In addition the checklist certainly confirms that assumptions are being made; and they are often different from the advice offered by writers on adult education on how to maximize learning for adults.

Some Proposals for Consideration

Where it seems appropriate to incorporate adult learning assumptions into the course of subject designs of distance teaching, the following approaches warrant serious consideration.

a. Course Aspects

The course offer a 'challenge' process to students, whereby a student can question the value of a recommended subject for them as individuals. In general, a challenge process is designed to achieve the following benefits:

- allow students to closely examine a recommended sequence of study for its suitability to their individual needs;

- encourage students to propose alternate study experiences, based on their own needs, which must meet previously identified standards (set by the educational institution) in terms of equivalence in conceptual difficulty and methods of assessment. In effect, the student has the task of satisfying the institution that the proposed replacement study experience is equivalent to

the original subject(s) under challenge, and it should be the responsibility of the student to present an acceptable proposal. Such a proposal should include sufficient detail in objectives, content, how taught and how assessed, for the replacement experience to be evaluated by the institution.

A further elaboration on the challenge process can be identified when the course is structured with a core sequence of compulsory subjects and an elective sequence of recommended subjects. When a core subject is challenged, there is a strong institutional case for the student to provide acceptable evidence that they already process the outcomes of the subject under challenge (this may require that they attempt only the evaluation aspects of the subject, for example). When a recommended subject is challenged, a student need not establish that they already possess its outcomes, but could challenge on the basis of their particular needs from a selected course of study.

An additional approach is the deliberate use of subjects which are designed to transmit process or experience (rather than cognitive) outcomes. For example, a course in adult education may contain a subject titled 'Experiential Techniques for Adults', in which the learning requirements consist of acquiring and practising the individual or group skills considered to be the techniques required by successful adult educators. This technique is much more compatible with a competency based approach to content selection and evaluation, rather than the more traditional mastery of factual information approach of most subjects.

The underlying purpose of the above techniques is to create a formal adult learning situation where the course design enables learners to experience the concepts of adult education, as well as to learn about them in a cognitive way.

b. Subject Design Aspects

As well as incorporating the above aspects into the overall course structure, the following suggestions can be adopted by adult educators, as features of any given subject.

The use of a firm proposal by the teacher, which is offered to students as a recommendation for an optimal study experience in a particular subject. This proposal would often contain:

- a core set of recommended experiences, considered fundamental by the teacher, with a suggestion that all participants need to experience them, or demonstrate they possess them;

- a set of options, considered likely to be more useful, from which students should select issues of relevance to their own needs; and,

- details of the subject assessment scheme, essentially in the form of a contract proposal. Each student is required to develop a personal proposal which would specify both the grade to be attempted for the subject and a personal work program to be attempted for that grade.

In this approach, the teacher and learner can finalize contracts on an individual student basis, and grades are awarded only as a result of completion of each personal contract, once agreed to by both parties.

Again, these details are provided to illustrate approaches to designing individual subject experiences, that are consistent with adult learning principles. Using these approaches, the teacher/adult educator becomes very much more of a resource person whose role is to assist, to clarify issues of choice, and provide information and expertise as required.

The approaches are not easy alternatives to traditional expository instruction techniques - they require considerable effort, flexibility and tolerance on behalf of the adult educator. The reward patterns for educators are also very different - being much more of a vicarious nature. However, the achievement and commitment from motivated adults can be quite outstanding, and the quality of satisfaction attainable is commensurately higher.

The motivation of adults learning through distance education is one of the most difficult of situations for the design of effective learning experiences. It is considered that a closer consideration of the criteria and examples mentioned in this paper would lead to more effective distance learning by adults - essentially by a greater incorporation of adult needs and characteristics into both course and subject designs and into the delivery system of distance education.

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